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XXV.—THE LINCOLN CORDWAINERS' PAGEANT

In determining whether the Lincoln mystery plays were processional like those of York and Chester or were acted on a fixed stage, it is important to know whether the St. Anne's Day Sights, about which there is a considerable amount of information, were merely floats or real plays. They are regarded as plays by Mr. Chambers¹ and by Mr. A. F. Leach.² A recently discovered account book of the Lincoln Cordwainers' Company, preserved in the Free Public Library,³ indicates what part the Cordwainers took in the St. Anne's day celebration and what the nature of the spectacle was. The Cordwainers were to maintain and send forth annually in the procession of St. Anne's day a pageant, called the Pageant of Bethlehem. This was not a play, and there is no evidence to show that they were responsible for a play at any season of the year. Their entries of expenses indicate a very different form of dramatic activity from that of the Weavers of Coventry and other companies in that city where the companies maintained plays.⁴ The following is a transcript of the entries in the Cordwainers' account book which refer to the dramatic activities of the company:

¹ E. K. Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage*, II, pp. 377-9.

² *Some English Plays and Players* in the "Furnivall Miscellany," 1901, pp. 224 ff.

³ This document I was able to see and transcribe through the kindness of Mr. Corns, the librarian.

⁴ Thomas Sharp, *Dissertation on the Coventry Mysteries*, 1825, pp. 13 ff.; *The Presentation in the Temple, a Pageant as originally represented by the Corporation of the Weavers of Coventry*, Abbotsford Club, 1836, pp. 20 ff.; or the writer's *Two Coventry Corpus Christi Plays*, 1902, App. II, where the records from Sharp are republished.

Folio 1: The outhe to be geven to the graceman at his eleccione . . . and at saint Anne even or day, I shalbe personally at the dressyng and araying of the pageaunt of Bethelēm and awaite of the sam in the tym of procession⁵ of the gild of the said saint Anne for the worshipec of this cite, and when the said procession is donne, the(n) I shall helpe to vnaray and vndress the said pageant agayn.

The outhe of an outbrother or suster: I shalbe redy yeerly to goo in procession with the graceman, the brether and susters of the fraternite from the chappell of saint Thomas of the hy Brige in Lincoln vnto the cathedrall church of Lincoln and ther to offer on farthyng as custom is.

F. 2: The outhe to be geven to the wardens of this gild. . . . I shall helpe to dresse and redresse the pageaunt of Bethelēm at saint Anne tyd and to goo in procession in saint Anne gild with master graceman from the place accustomed to the moder church of Lincoln and so doune aga(i)n. I shalbe redy to goo with master graceman and helpe him to gether the collect money and brotherhod of euery brother and suster, whenas he shall command.

The outhe to be geven to the Dean of this gild. . . . I shalbe personally at the dressyng and redressyng of the pageaunt of Bethelēm with master graceman at saint Anne tyd and to await the sam with master graceman except seiknes or disseis lett me.

F. 3: Inventorie. Itm. on vestment, albe and ammes to the sam, and all other thyngs holl to the sam belongyng, of the gyfte of Thomas Stowe graceman in the year of our lord m cccc xixth. Itm. on lynen awter clothe of ij yerds long.⁶

The pageant of Bethelēm. It. iijre lynen clothes stened for damask warks for bethelem. It. a gret hed gilded set with vii beames and vii glasses for the sam, and on long beame for the mouthe of the said hed. It. iijre greatt stars for the sam with iijre glasses and a cord for the same steris. It. ij angells with sensers for the sam. It. on cage for to ber dowes in.

ACCOUNTS.⁷

1527. *Expenses necessarie.* It. *soluti pro le pageants Rome de Bethelēm in ecclesia fratrum carmilitorum* iiij*d.* It. *sol. pro uno jantaculo facto pastoribus in processione gilde sancte Anne* vjd. It.

⁵ Written precession and usually below.

⁶ The latter entry is crossed out; both of course belong to the strictly religious activity of the gild.

⁷ The usual headings in each annual computus are *in nocte potacionis*, *stipendia officiorum*, *obit. fact. hoc anno*, and *expens. necessar.* (or "other expenses"). The items concerning the pageant are under the last mentioned heading.

sol. pro vna corda ad *dominationem* le pageaunt jd; et le takils et pro vno speculo jd ob; *summa* iij d ob. It. soli. pro emendacione brachij vnus angeli jd. . . . It. sol. pro vna perna(?) le cage iiij d.

1528. Alie expenses necessarie. It. soli. pro corda ad le pageant de Bethlem vjd. It. sol. pro faccione de handill le wyndows de la pageant jd. It. sol. in expensis pro le pageaunt de Bethlem xix d. (f. 22b) It. soli. pro le pageaunts Rome iiij d.⁸

1529. (f. 29b) Alie expenses necessarie. It. pro portacione de la pageaunt de Bethlem in precessione sancte Anne, ultra omnes denarios collectos pro eodem xid ob.

1530. (f. 38) Alie expenses necessarie. It. soli. pro portacione de Bethlem xd.⁹ It. soli. pro le pageaunt de Bethlem standante ad Whitfrerie iiij d. It. pro le taks et seruicia jd ob.

1531. (f. 46) Alii expenses necessarie. It. soli. pro emendacione de le pageaunt de Bethlem ijd. It. soli. pro clauis ad idem opus jd. It. solitum pro pane et servicia portantibus de le pageaunts vijd ob. It. solitum pro le pageaunt Room iiij d. It. soli. portantibus eiusdam le pageaunt iiij d.

1532. (f. 54) Other expenses. It. paid for bryngyng vp the pageaunt of Bethleem at saint Anne messe xijd. It. paid in expenses for the plaiers ijd. It. paid to the plaiers above all that was gathered viij d.¹⁰ It. for nails to the pageaunt jd. It. for the Rome of the pageaunt standyng iiij d.

1533. (f. 60) Expenses necessarie. It. for mending the pageaunt of Bethleem ijd. It. for shepperds deners at vjd. It. for ij gallons ayell and a penyworth breed iiij d. It. for taks to the pageaunt ob. . . . It. for the pageaunt stondyng in the Whiet freris iiij d. It. paid for a lynen [cloth] to the pageaunt ijd.

1534. (f. 66b) Expenses necessarie. It. mending the pageaunt ijd ob. It. for the sheperds dener vid. It. for ij potts aiell xij d. It.

⁸ An item in this list "*ad le pypers in die processionis* iiij d" probably refers to a procession on the day of St. Crispin and St. Crispianus.

⁹ The following item for this year stands after the expense for St. Anne's day and before the payment for rent: "It. soli. coco nostro iiij d. It. soli. certis de players in aula nostra ad cenam vjs iiij d."

¹⁰ This entry is probably to be regarded as a record of a special play like that given in the hall two years before; but since it says *the* players instead of *certain* players, it may indicate that a general levy for the Corpus Christi play, falling short in the sum of viij d, was made up out of the common funds.

for wyn to the prest xs *jd.* It. for breid *ijd.* It. for strawe *jd.*¹¹
It. for the dener of the gylde day viijs. It. for ij dossyn trenchers, etc.

1535. (f. 73b) *Expenses necessarie.* . . . It. to the shepperds
and 6 pageaunt berars *iiijd.* . . . It. for weshyng of clothes this
yeer *iiijd.*¹²

1536. (f. 79) *Expenses necessarie.* It. paid to iij sheppards at
saint Anne gylde *xviijd.* It. paid to vj berars of the pageaunt in the
sam gylde *xviijd.* It. for bred and ayell spent in the mynster the sam
tym *vjd.* It. for takytts to the pageaunts *jd.*¹³

1537. (f. 86) *Allocationes.* It. soli. *pro emendacione unius ale*
angeli jd. It. soli. *pro emendacione de pageant de Bethелеem xviijd.*
It. *solitum pro ijobus speculis de le pageant iiijd.* It. soli. *pro le*
tynfoul pro le paynttyng faciei verniculi iij d ob. It. soli. *pro vna*
corda dicte le pageaunt iiijd. It. soli. *pro pane et servicia data*
portarijs dicte le pageaunt in die Saint Anne iiijd. . . . It. soli.
pastoribus et portarijs de le pageaunt predicta x + d non allocatur.

1539. (f. 95b) *Alie expenses.* It. for mendyng the pageaunt of
Bethelhem and cord *vd.* It. for costs and charges to the mynster with
the pageaunt of saint Anne day *xiiijd.* It. to the bell ryngers *ijd.*
It. to the mynstrells *iiijd.*^{13a} It. for the pageaunt standyng in the
whitt freris *iiijd.*¹⁴

1540. (f. 99) It. payd for mendyng the pageant *viiijd.* It. paid
for beryng the pageant *vd.* It. for bred and aille to the berrars of
the sam *ijd.* It. for a cord to the padgayn *iiijd.*¹⁵

1542. (f. 109) It. for bearyng vpp the paygaunte of Saint Anne

¹¹ The last three entries may or may not refer to St. Anne's day. They are followed in the account by these entries: "It. paid to the porter *iiijd.*"

¹² This entry may not refer to the pageant.

¹³ The following entries seem also to refer to the ceremonies at the minister or to the pageant: "It. for weshyng the awlbe and ames that the prest syngs in *ijd.* It. for a pottyll wyn geven to Master Sapcotts *iiijd.* . . . It. for weshyng herd clothes and towells *vjd.* It. for bred and wyn to said prest *vid.*"

^{13a} The last two entries are not necessarily to be connected with the St. Anne's day procession, since the entries in these lists of miscellaneous expenses seem to have no fixed arrangement.

¹⁴ Following this entry are these: "It. for gloves *viiijd.* It. for mendyng the angells of the hersse *ijd.*"

¹⁵ There is no entry for 1541 which refers to the pageants. The entry "It. to the waits *iiijd.*" evidently does not.

day and the morn aftur *xxd.* It. for brede and ayle to the pagiaunt berers at the mynster *ijd.*¹⁰

1542 (?) (f. 112b) It. for beryng vp the pageant of bethelem *vjd.* It. for kydds *xxd.* bred and aill at mynster at Saint Anne tyd *ij—summa xxiij.*^{10a}

After f. 112b there are no further entries referring to the pageant until f. 121 when the following undated entry occurs. The gild had leased its house and distributed its funds in 1545. It is obvious from an order of the secret council, found in Corp. Min. Bks., III, f. 110, that the year is 1554:

1554. (f. 121) layng out for the pachagan at Saint Annes. Paments. It. pade to Spede the caruer for makyng of the paghan *ijs ijd.* It. pade for nalls and drynke to the carvars *iijd.* It. pade to Wylliam Lyttyll for panttyng ther off; the hed and the starēs *ijs.* It. pade to the shepherds on sant An daye *xviij.* It. pade for drynk to the berers of the pagane *iijd.*

1555. Layng owt for the paggane the nyxte yere after. It. pad to the *iiij* shepherdes on Sant Anedaye *xviij.* It. pade to the berers off the paggan on Santanedaye *ijs.* It. payde for takxe *jd.* It. in alle *id.* It. for howsrowme for the paggane to Jhonsone *iijd.*

Then follows a statement of rent apparently due the gild from one William Potter and the following list:

Paments. It. pade in the seconde and thurde yere off owre soferand lawarde and ladye kynge and qweyne [Philip and Mary] off Eyngland, ffransse, Iarlande, napylls and so forth, etc. It. pade to Roberte Jonsone on Schant Anesdaye laste paste for the rowme off the paggyene all the yere a-fore paste *iiiij.* It. pade for berynge of the paggane of Sant Anes daye last to *vj* felows *ijs.* It. for a corde to the sterrys *iiiij.* It. pade for taks and pacthrede *ijd.* It. pade for drynke and brede to the berars *viiij.*

¹⁰ This entry is cancelled and apparently repeated on f. 112b.

^{10a} The entries which follow probably have no connection with St. Anne's tide: "It. for cheis *xiiiij.* for *iiiij* dessyn tayks to Xpofer brampsten *iiiij—summa vs ijd.* It. for *ij* dossyn bred and halff *ijs vjd.* It. to James Lovday for lyghtyng candylls at mynster *iiiij.* It. to the mynstrells *iijd.*"

The gild resumes its normal activity with the fourth year of Queen Elizabeth, but there is no further mention of the Pageant of Bethlehem.

It is evident that the Cordwainers presented in dumbshow a spectacle of the Angels and the Shepherds. The invoice given at the front of the book and the entry of 1554 of the reconstruction of the pageant at the time of the Marian reaction show what their stage properties were. They had a pageant to which belonged cloths stained damask, apparently to represent the walls of Bethlehem, a great gilded figure head set with seven beams (of light?), and seven glasses, apparently over the beams, and one long beam for the mouth of the head; three stars with three glasses and a cord belonging to them, and, finally, two inanimate angels with censers. The cage to put doves in seems also to belong to the pageant. The scene was probably limited to the angels and the shepherds, since there are no other characters, such as Joseph and Mary, who would have appeared had it been a regular nativity play or even an elaborate piece of dumbshow. It is to be observed also that this is the composition of a somewhat similar spectacle in the Dublin procession which is described as "The shep[er]dis, with an angel syngying Gloria in excelsis Deo."¹⁷ Note also in connection with the use of a cord and a star in these entries the well-known entry in the Churchwardens' accounts of St. Nicholas, Yarmouth, between 1462 and 1612, for "making a new star," "leading the star," "a new balk line to the star and riving the same."¹⁸ One is reminded also of the picture from *Heures a Lusaige de Rome*,¹⁹ where the shepherds rest amid their flocks and look upwards at two angels beneath

¹⁷ Chambers, II, p. 364.

¹⁸ Chambers, II, p. 399.

¹⁹ Cf. Mr. A. W. Pollard, *English Miracle Plays* (1909), p. 31.

canopies, with a figure head between them, and bear in their hands a scroll with the words, *Gloria in altissimi[s] Deo in terra p[ax]*. The shepherds at Lincoln were real persons, possibly real shepherds, but there are no other characters; also no payments to actors, no rehearsals, no mention of plays except on two special occasions at the dinner of the gild, and no evidence that regular expenses for a play were incurred at any other season of the year. The St. Anne's day expenses are too slight and too definite to refer to the performance of a play, and there can be no reasonable doubt that the business of the Cordwainers on St. Anne's day, during the years for which we have their records, was to present a mere pageant or float to be drawn through the streets from the Chapel of St. Thomas upon the High Bridge to the minster upon the hill. What happened at the minster cannot be definitely told from these accounts. Each outbrother and sister offered a farthing there; there was no doubt a general offering also. The proximity in the records of the reward given to the priest for singing seems to indicate that the Cordwainers had a special religious service at the cathedral at the time of the procession. The bearers of the pageant and probably the shepherds had bread and ale there. The Cordwainers' account book gives no further information; this must be sought in the records of the Cathedral Chapter.

As to the procession itself, a good deal of interesting information can be gained from the minute books of the municipal corporation, which begin with 1511 and contain acts of the Common Council, the Secret Council, and the Court Leet. Most of the entries with which we are concerned are summarized in the Historical MSS. Commission, 14th Report, App. VIII. Every man and woman being able within the city was required to be a brother or

sister in St. Anne's gild and to pay 4d. at the least.²⁰ Also every man in his degree must wait upon the mayor in the procession on St. Anne's day to the worship of the city under pain of 4d.²¹ To every occupation within the city was assigned a pageant which they were regularly ordered to apparel and bring forth. These orders had by 1511 become routine matters and are quite general.²² The municipal corporation had an interest in the sights both because of the regulation demanded in so extensive an affair in the community and because of the close connection which existed between the mayor and council and the gild of St. Anne. The aldermen were themselves held responsible for one part of the pageant. They were required to furnish crimson silk gowns for the "kings" in the procession, must send forth a servant with a rochet upon him bearing a torch to be carried in the procession about the sacrament, and must themselves under penalty wait upon the mayor.²³ Likewise those who had occupied the office of sheriff, who were known as sheriff peers, were required to give their attendance upon the mayor on St. Anne's day and to wait at the hall until he came thither, also to have a person in an "honest gown" going in the procession among the prophets.²⁴ The objective point of the procession was the minster. In 1524 every man was ordered to give his attendance, so that "Mr. Maier be at the Mynster by x of the bell."²⁵ Constables and under-

²⁰ *Entries of Common Council 1511-1541* ("White Book"), f. 97, 1519.

²¹ F. 179, 1524.

²² F. 97b, 1519; f. 115, 1520; f. 144, 1522, etc.

²³ F. 81, 1518; f. 107, 1520; f. 142b, 1521; f. 129, 1523; f. 169, 1524; f. 179b, 1524; f. 189, 1526; f. 198, 1527.

²⁴ F. 131b, 1521; f. 159, 1523; f. 179b, 1524; etc.

²⁵ F. 169.

constables were required to wait upon the pageants upon St. Anne's day by seven of the clock, both to keep the people from the array and to take heed of such as wore garments in the procession.²⁶ Every mayor in the year following his mayoralty became graceman of St. Anne's gild, and the two persons that had been his sheriffs became wardens of the gild to help the graceman in his business, particularly, in the matter of gathering money from the brethren and sisters.²⁷ The corporation enacted special legislation on various matters concerning the gilds and procession. One of those is the well-known act of 1521²⁸ in which the council decreed, after it had been represented to them by the acting graceman of the gild that owing to the plague in the city he is unable to get such garments and other "honourments" as should be in the pageants, that Mr. Alanson should be instantly desired to borrow a gown of my Lady Powes "for one of the Maryes and thother Mary to be arrayed in the cremesyng gown of velvet that longyth to the same gild." Another is the act of 1539, which also reveals a feature of the procession, directing a large door to be made in the late schoolhouse that the pageants may be set in and every pageant to pay 4d. and "Noy schyppe xijd."²⁹

What happened at the minster can be determined with some clearness from chapter acts and accounts preserved there; but space is at this time lacking to go into it. They apparently did not perform the Corpus Christi play. Entries for 1473, 1474, 1475, in the accounts, show that the Corpus Christi play was acted at the feast of Corpus Christi, and this is probably to be understood in the case

²⁶ F. 42b, 1515; f. 81, 1518; f. 131b, 1531; f. 198, 1527.

²⁷ F. 160b, 1523.

²⁸ F. 132.

²⁹ F. 276.

of other entries. Accounts for 1482, 1489, show that the Sights of St. Anne were put forth in the same year with the Pater Noster play; those for 1486, 1487, show that they could accompany the Corpus Christi play. These same correspondences are also indicated by the Cordwainers' accounts given above in comparison with the corporation minutes. It is also significant that cathedral computi for 1482 indicate that the Pater Noster play lasted for two days.

As to the manner of acting the play, certain considerations would indicate that it was not processional. It was evidently not managed by the municipal corporation, but by the Corpus Christi gild. It is, however, impossible to see how, if the individual plays were acted at various stations round about the city, they could have been policed without the intervention of the mayor and his brethren. At Coventry and York there is much legislation referring to the location of the stations at which the plays were acted processionally. There is none at Lincoln. It is furthermore very doubtful if there would have been two sets of pageant vehicles in the city, and the Cordwainers certainly did not participate in any other dramatic festival besides the St. Anne's day sights. They paid rent regularly for their pageant standing in the White Friars until the order of 1539 to the effect that the stuff belonging to St. Anne's gild was to be laid in the chapel of the bridge, and the pageants stored in the late schoolhouse; the payments for rent then cease. Further indications that the Lincoln play was stationary will come from the cathedral accounts.³⁰

³⁰ An entry given by Mr. A. F. Leach, "History of Lincolnshire Schools," in the *Victoria County History of Lincolnshire*, II, p. 464, indicates that there was a stationary play also at Louth in Lincolnshire: "Paid to Mr. Goodall for certain money by him laid out for the furnishing of the play played in the market stede on Corpus Christi Day, the year before my entering (1555-6)."

The Corpus Christi play at Lincoln was thus entirely distinct from the St. Anne's day sights. That the two were once united, or that the St. Anne's day sights were based upon the Corpus Christi play, cannot reasonably be doubted when the relation of the plays and the procession at places like York and Chester is taken into consideration together with the whole series of entries referring to the plays and pageants at Lincoln. This state of affairs seems, in some measure, to agree with the hypothesis that the so-called Coventry Mysteries or Hegge plays are the lost Lincoln cycle, since the Coventry Mysteries were once evidently a processional play, but, in the form preserved, were obviously acted on a stationary stage.³¹

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³¹ See the present writer's letter to the *Athenæum*, August 16, 1913, and to the *Nation*, October 8, 1913; also his *Note on the Home of Ludus Coventriae*, published with *An Inquiry into the Composition and Structure of Ludus Coventriae*, by Miss Esther L. Swenson, The University of Minnesota *Studies in Language and Literature*, No. 1, 1914; Miss Swenson's article is also important.